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# REAL BIRD TALES



BY CLARA J. DENTON



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SUE SEELEY











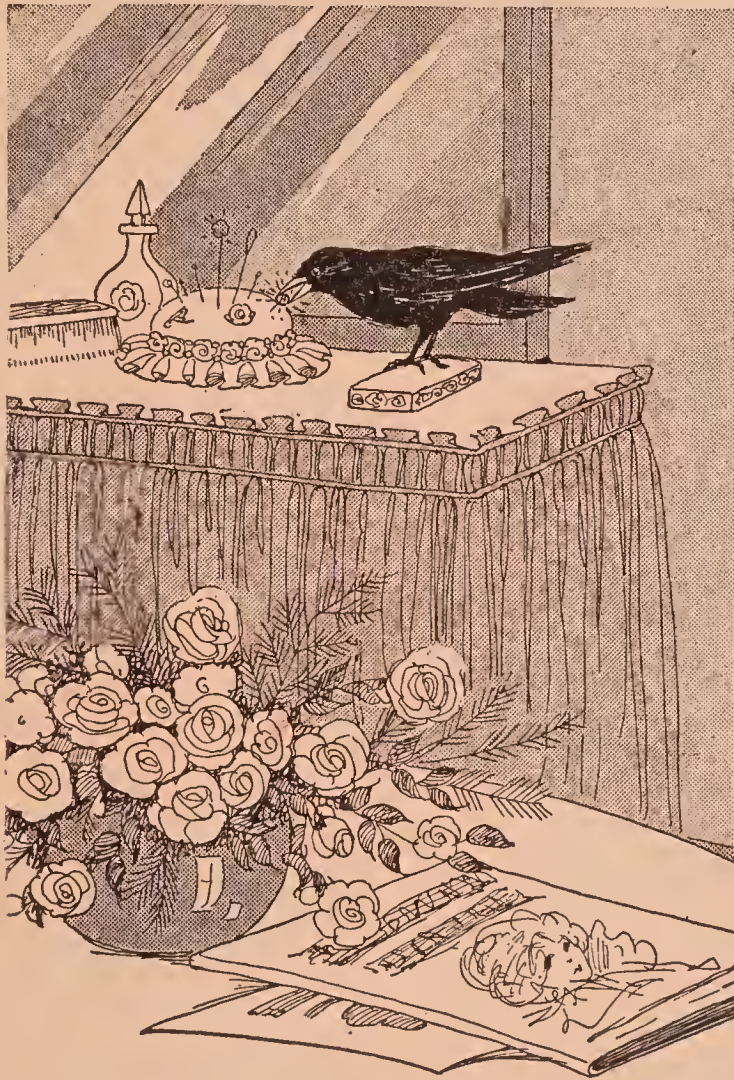




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187

# Real Bird Tales



*Don't kill the little birds  
That sing about your door  
Soon as the joyous spring has come  
And chilly winds are o'er.*

THE TREE-TOP BIRDS FLY-AWAY





*The Dinner Call*



# REAL BIRD TALES

COMMON BIRDS *of* FARM *and* ORCHARD

BY CLARA J. DENTON

• • AUTHOR OF • •

"BUSY LITTLE BIRDS" "REAL OUT-OF-DOOR  
STORIES" "OPEN AIR STORIES", ETC.



ILLUSTRATED BY SUE SEELEY

"A JUST RIGHT BOOK"

PUBLISHED BY

ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY

CHICAGO

U. S. A.



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## REAL BIRD TALES

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### JUST RIGHT BOOKS

BY

CLARA J. DENTON

BUSY LITTLE BIRDS  
HOMESPUN STORIES  
COZY-CORNER STORIES  
REAL OUT-OF-DOORS STORIES  
OPEN AIR STORIES

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SEP -6 1924

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## NOTE.

The unusual bird incidents given in the following pages are verified by the actual observers, the numbers appended thereto refer to the names which are given in the appendix.

The incidents marked with an asterisk (\*) were seen by the author.

## AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

"Michigan Bird Life," by Walter Bradford Barrows

"Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America," by Frank M. Chapman.

"Bird Lore," back and current numbers.



## APPENDIX

Names of the observers of certain incidents which appear in these stories:

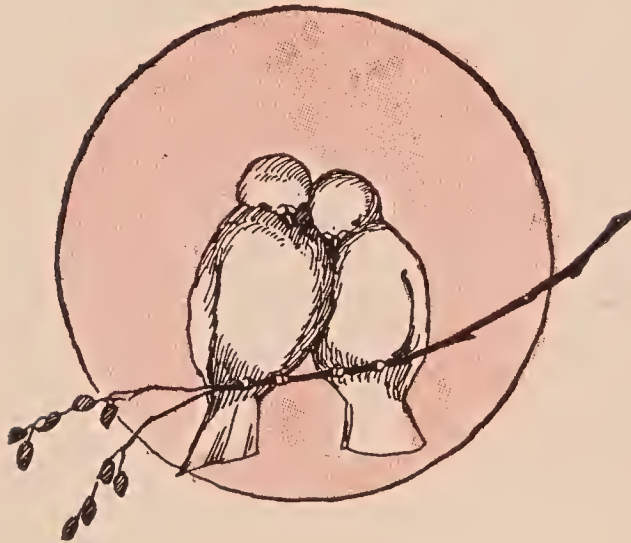
- |   |
|---|
| <p>(1) Miss Lititia I. Foster, Cloverdale, Barry Co., Mich.<br/>(3) Mrs. W. S. Coleman, Grand Rapids, Mich.</p> |
|---|







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*Mr. Robin Was a Proud and Happy Husband*



# Real Bird Tales



*The Robin's Nest*

## FENCE POST TWITTERS

THE days went on swiftly and happily to the dwellers of The Orchard Home. Mrs. Robin watched the nest closely and every night saw a new egg added to the nest



until four beautiful blue eggs were tucked away in the place prepared for them with so much care. Mr. Robin was a proud and happy husband and he spent a good many minutes standing on the edge of the nest gazing at its precious contents.

Mrs. Robin was quite as proud and happy but the morning after the fourth egg was laid she turned her little head on one side as she said to her husband in her sweetest tones, "Now dear Robin, I have done my part, I've laid the eggs which must soon hatch into lively young robins so, if you'll just stay here and watch the nest awhile, so as to be sure that no red squirrels, blue jays, blackbirds or other thieves can come here and harm our nest."



“I will go in search of my own breakfast, and perhaps when I have eaten that I’ll fly around a little, just to see what is going on in the world.”

“When Mr. Blackbird was talking to me the other day he told me it was fine that I was a regular stay-at-home but he seemed to think that birds who stay at home as much as I do cannot be very learned so as I have my long time of sitting before me, I mean to see what a little flying around in the world will do for me. Perhaps when I return I’ll be so learned you’ll be very much pleased.”

“All right, but do not go too far then,” called her husband at his loudest but she was out of sight before he had finished his twittering.



He looked very lonely indeed as he settled down on the limb near the nest.

Perhaps he was wondering what he should do with those four beautiful eggs if his little wife should get lost and not come back at all. But no lonesome thoughts troubled Mrs. Robin, as she flew clear out of the orchard and down to the lawn in front of the houses where she had never failed to find a satisfying breakfast of angle worms. When she had eaten all she wanted she flew to the top of the tall white house and looked around.

It was still early morning and there were many birds flitting about, but they all seemed too busy to talk to her. Presently she noticed quite close to her, a tall tree stump and down its rough side was running, head first,





*The Chickadee Flew to a Post Quite Near Mrs. Robin*

a small bird clad in black and white. He seemed to be picking something very good to eat from under the bark of the stump. When he had nearly reached the bottom he flew to a fence post quite near Mrs. Robin and sang out merrily,

“ 'Tsic-a-dee-dee.”

“Why,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, turning herself around to get a better view of the new comer. “You must be a Chickadee!”

“Indeed, that is just what I am, have you never seen a bird like me before?”



“No, I never have, you see, I am a very young bird, I was only hatched late last year, but I have heard about you a great deal.”

“Indeed, and what have you heard about me? Only good, I hope.”

“O no, nothing bad, only about your funny ways, staying all winter where it is cold and running down the tree trunks head first. Then, too, I have heard about your funny song that is if you can call it a song, but it doesn’t compare with the one my husband sings.”

“Of course, I must own up to that, I know who you are well enough, you are a mother robin. How is it you can leave your family and sit here on the fence post so long at your ease?”



“My eggs are not hatched yet, in fact they are just laid. My nest is back in the orchard, and my good husband is watching the home while I take a little flight. Do you mind telling me where your nest is?”

“Right over in that stump,” returned the Chickadee. “Do you see the little hole near the top? That is our front door and my mate sits there as happy as can be. She has under her warm breast seven white eggs with brown specks on them. When they are all hatched out don’t you think my mate and I will be kept pretty busy feeding all those hungry little ones?”

“What kind of food do you have to find?” asked the robin.

“O, everything that is alive that isn’t too big for us to catch, spiders, caterpillars,



worms, grasshoppers, daddy-long-legs, butterflies, moths, flies, and all kinds of insect eggs and their larvae. Oh! I must say, we will be a busy pair when those seven eggs have changed into seven wide open mouths which need to be filled just so many times a day, 'Tsic-a-dee-dee!' "

"You seem very happy over it all anyway," said Mrs. Robin.

"Of course, who wouldn't be happy when he is alive, has a pair of wings and knows just where to find food when he is hungry? But then I have had my troubles, only a short time ago a cruel boy killed my mate and O, I tell you, I was sad and lonesome enough for a while."

"That was too bad," chirped Mrs. Robin in her most sorry tone, "but you found an-



other mate, of course, since you say there is a nest in the stump with some eggs in it,”

“Yes, I found another one though it took me some time to do so. I don’t know why it is, but Chickadees are not so plenty as they were once. My great, great grandfather, who died just the other day, told me that there used to be flocks and flocks of them around this creek when he was a young bird.”

“O, is there a creek anywhere around here?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“Yes, indeed, just a short flight across the meadow, in that little piece of woods. We love to go there, but my mate thought it would be better to have our nest in that tall stump, so we agreed that way.”

“I am sure that was very good for both of you,” said Mrs. Robin.

“Good to ourselves, yes, because when she is pleased she’s sure to be happy and contented, but soon I must be looking around for something more for her to eat.”

“Do you ever forget her?”

“O never, how could I? Because when I am hungry myself, I know she must be the same, so I fly and feed her first.”

“You are indeed a very good husband,” said Mrs. Robin with a merry chirp.

“She will not agree with you unless I feed her pretty soon, but before I go I should like very much to tell you a story about one of those tiny creatures they call Humming birds.”



“O, but just wait a minute, until I catch that white Butterfly,” said Mrs. Robin, and away she flew in swift chase after the dainty morsel.



## MEETING MORE BIRDS



**I**N a moment or two, Mrs. Robin returned clicking her bill happily over her quickly found meal.

“Now,” she said, “I am ready to hear your story about the Humming bird,” and she settled herself in comfort on the fence post again.

“Yesterday,” continued the Chickadee, “I went into a queer, dark place to look for some



spiders and there was a poor little Humming bird caught in a big thick spider web. I didn't dare go near it, because I knew I couldn't help it any and might tangle it up more, so I flew out into the air as quickly as I could and lit on a tree-trunk to see what I could find to take the place of the spider I had wanted. While I was busy in this way, the first thing I knew there was a human quite near me holding that mite of a bird in its hand and trying to get the cobweb off its tiny legs and body.

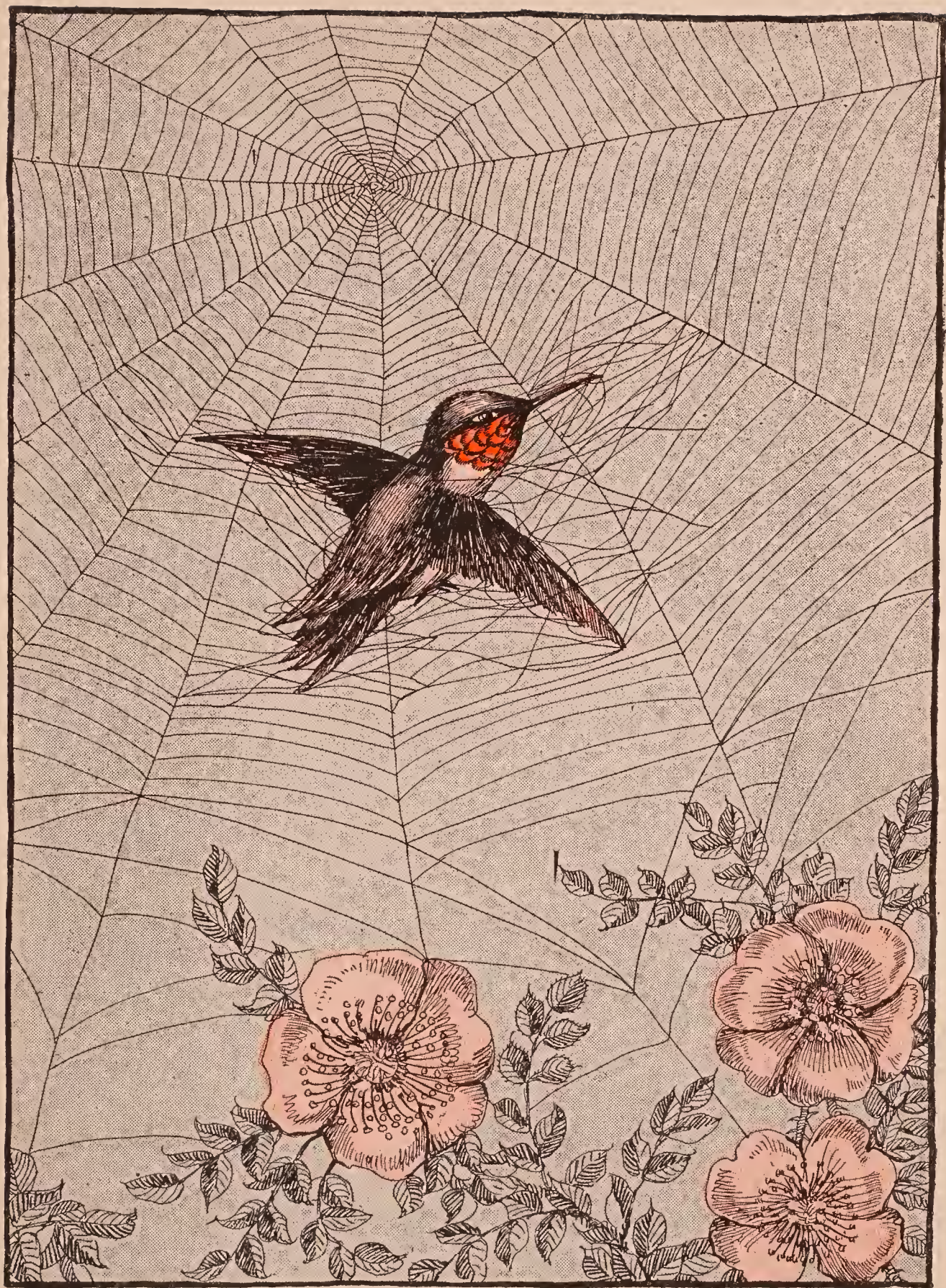
My! I thought it would never be clean again, and as it was lying so still in that big, queer hand, I thought the poor little thing must be scared out of its wits. After what seemed a long, long time the cobweb was all

wiped away, I suppose, for it flew off into the air and its mate, who must have been waiting nearby, flew to meet it. They put their little bills together and they whirled around in the air like two wheels, as if happy with joy. My! but I was glad for them. But now good bye, I hope we'll meet again some day," and away the little fellow flew, merrily repeating his 'Tsic-a-dee-dee'."

When the Chickadee was gone, Mrs. Robin sat for several minutes lost in deep thought.

"How many good people there are after all," she was saying to herself, "I wonder if all the birds everywhere find as many good humans as there are around this part of the world." Just at that moment, a tiny Humming bird flew by. "O, come back!" called





*There Was a Humming Bird Caught in a Big, Thick Spider Web*



Mrs. Robin eagerly, "Come back, I want to talk to you."

The humming bird turned herself around and lit on a tall weed near the fence post on which the Robin was perched.

"I want to know if you are the Humming bird who was caught in that big ugly cobweb yesterday?"

"Yes," twittered the Humming Bird, "I am the very same and I am still surprised to think that I am alive."

"But do tell me, weren't you very much scared when the human was holding you?"

"Scared! indeed I was. I thought at one time that my heart would break right through my body, it beat so fast and hard although the hand which picked me off the cobweb was very soft and tender."



“But you are all right now?”

“O yes indeed I am, and I have the dearest little nest in a bush under a big tree down near the creek, it is soft and warm inside and there is one tiny white egg in it.”

“How do you make your nest soft and warm inside?”

“O, I line it with cobwebs, that was what I was after when I got caught yesterday, that cobweb was too big and strong for me. Then I take the down from the thistles and the dandelions too. O, I think it is the cosiest and prettiest little home that you ever saw!”

“And does your good husband stay with you and help you bring up the little ones?”

“I am sorry to say, he does not, he is a good attentive mate until the babies are hatched,

then he seems to lose interest in his family and goes off by himself, leaving me to bring up the children as best I can. But now, I hear him calling me and I must be good to him while I have him with me, so good bye," and with a whirl she was gone.

"Well, I wouldn't think much of that kind of a husband," said Mrs. Robin to herself, "and perhaps it would be a good thing for me to return to my husband and see what kind of help he wanted while I was away learning."

She turned her head toward the orchard, but before she spread her wings in flight she remembered again that she was soon to begin her long time of staying on the nest and that this was her last chance for a far flight away from home.



“I believe I will just fly down to that creek the Chickadee was telling me about and see how it looks there,” she thought. She turned herself about in the other direction and darted away. She had no trouble in finding the creek, for though she was only a young bird, when she saw the bushes all leaning over in one direction, she knew that the creek was under them. So in a very short time she was sitting all alone on a limb listening to the gentle gurgle of the stream.

She was not left alone long, however, for presently she heard a lively chirping quite near her and a voice said,

“How do you do, Madam Robin?”

“How do you know my name, and who is it talking?” asked the Robin wonderingly.

“Everybody knows a mother Robin,” said the voice, “and perhaps you will know my name if you look at me closely.”

“But I don’t see you!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin quickly as she peered around among the shadows.

“Well, I will come closer,” said the voice, and immediately a strange bird sat on the limb beside her.

“Now, tell me what I look like,” he said.

“You look like a big, black bird,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, still very much surprised.

“So now, you have my name exactly, Black-bird, and very glad I am indeed to know you.”

“Black-bird!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin with a puzzled air, “Mr. Blackbird called on me a few days ago, but it wasn’t you for that bird had beautiful red wings.”



“O, I know, that is the Red-winged Black-bird, he is my first cousin. But now, tell me, Mrs. Robin, what do you think of this place for a nest? Don’t you wish you had built here instead of in that orchard on the hill so near a house where there are certain to be wicked cats about?”

“How do you know where my nest is?” asked the little creature in surprise.

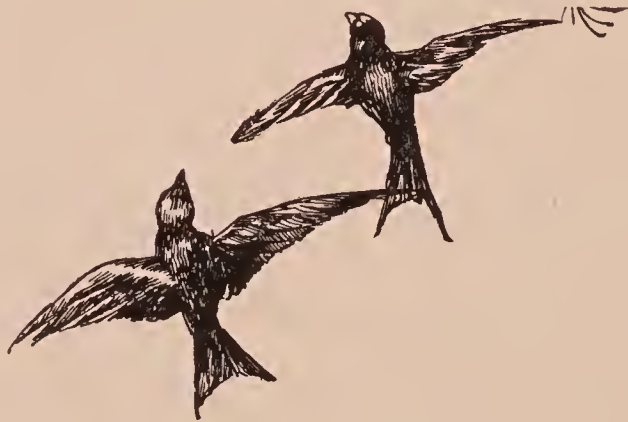
“O, my cousin, the Redwing, with whom you chatted so long about the Kingfisher told me about it.”

“But how do you know that I am the one? I should think Mother Robins would all look alike to you.”

“Well, you see they don’t, you never mistake any other Robin for your good husband, do you?”

“O no!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “I can tell him anywhere.”

“Of course, just as I can pick out my mate down in yonder swamp where there are hundreds of other Blackbirds.”





## IN THE SWAMP



*Mrs. Robin*

**M**RS. Robin jumped around in great eagerness when the Blackbird spoke of the swamp.

“O,” she said, “is there a swamp near here?”

“Yes,” he said, “we think it is one of the most beautiful swamps you ever saw. You

can find it by flying up this creek, for it rises in a cool bubbling spring just at the edge of the swamp.”

“Is that the same swamp which lies beyond the orchard, where we are nesting? asked Mrs. Robin.

“Yes, the very same, and you should see the big company of Blackbirds, when they are going to roost at night, they are as busy as a lot of humans.”

“I know all about those roosting places, last year there was a Robins’ roosting place somewhere near where I was hatched and as soon as we nestlings were big enough we had to go off with Father Robin and roost there every night.”

“I know how the Robins do late in the summer or early fall, but in the spring they





*You Should See the Blackbirds Going to Roost*



go off each pair by themselves. We Blackbirds are different, we stay together through the hatching time. This swamp has been our home for many, many years. When we go away each fall we say over to each other that perhaps before we come back in the spring those human creatures called people will get to work upon our swamp and destroy it."

"Why, I don't see how they could!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin.

"But it is possible, and any one would know by that speech that you are a very young bird! There is just no end to the many things which people can do. I have heard my great grandfather tell that the Blackbirds once owned a beautiful swamp where they always spent their summers, and



one year in that wonderful swamp, there was hatched out a beautiful, snow-white Blackbird."

At this the Robin chirped so loud and hard that she nearly fell off the limb.

"O, you don't expect me to believe that? 'A white Blackbird' " she said.

"But, it was just that. The egg was laid by a Blackbird, and when the bird was hatched out it was as white as snow, it was near the nest where my great grandfather was hatched. All the birds in the swamp were as proud as they could be of the beautiful white creature. I have heard that it looked wonderful flying around among all the other Blackbirds."

"Did it stay white always, or did it turn black when it grew older?"

“I cannot tell how it might have changed, because one day some men came into the swamp, carrying those dreadful things called guns, and one of them shot the beautiful white creature and carried it away.”\*

“How dreadful!” exclaimed the Robin.

“Yes, wasn’t it? but a stranger thing than that was yet to come. When this flock of Blackbirds came back in the spring, their beautiful swamp was gone, and instead of the great trees where they had been so happy, they found houses and people living in them.”

“I don’t see how they could build houses on a swamp,” said Mrs. Robin. “I have heard my husband say that the ground in swamps is wet and soft.”





“So it is, but there was a Blue Jay living near the swamp and, as he stays around all winter and likes to be near people and watch them, he told the Blackbirds when they came back in the spring just how all the changes had been made. He said the people dug great, deep ditches in the swamp and so drained the water out of it into the river.



Then they brought great cart loads of good dry ground and spread it all over what had been wet, black mud, so you see, the place was then quite as good as any other to build houses upon."

"O yes, I see, but what did all the Black-birds do then?"

"They hunted up the swamp where we are living now."

"I think I will fly over there and see what it is like," said Mrs Robin.

"See what it is like!" exclaimed the Black-bird, "Do you mean to tell me that you have never been in a swamp?"

"Never, I know nothing about one, except what my husband has told me, he, you know, has been everywhere and has seen everything."



“O yes, yes, I understand and you would like to keep up with him, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, and then there is another reason why I want to see the swamp.”

She then told the story of the mother turkey who had chased the hawk and that Robin had said that she had been obliged to cross a big swamp either by flying or walking, “and so,” she added, “I should like to see just what kind of a place it is.”

“I hope you like it. You will find it is the most beautiful place in the world, although I am not so sure that you will agree with me in that.”

“I know I shall not,” said Mrs. Robin, “because I think the orchard on the hill is the most beautiful place in all the world.” And with this remark, away she flew.

The first living creatures seen by Mrs. Robin as she entered the swamp, were Black-birds flying about in every direction hunting food. She did not stay long among them, but flew farther into the swamp, meeting as she went along, many birds whose names she did not know. She flew so far and so fast that she began to think that maybe she could not find her way back, when, suddenly she saw the waters of the lake glinting through the trees.

She chirped and twittered in her joy, "Now I know where I am."

She lit on the branch of a tall tree and looked off on the lake, it certainly was a delightful picture. Its waters were as calm and bright as a mirror. Then she looked around



on the swamp. The grass grew tall and lush, flowers were blooming everywhere and the birds were singing from bush and tree. "It is indeed a beautiful spot," she said to herself with her best notes, which nearly approached a song.

Suddenly she heard a noise quite near her and turning about she saw a queer, long-legged creature standing in the lake, directly beneath her, with its eyes fixed on the water.

"I wonder what that is?" she thought, "surely not a bird, although those things on its sides look like wings."

While she was watching and wondering the queer creature suddenly plunged its beak into the water and brought up a good sized fish in its long, sharp bill. The next moment

her doubts as to the creature being a bird were scattered, for it spread its immense wings and flew across the lake to a distant tree where it alighted.

Mrs. Robin was full of curiosity to know whether or not this immense bird nested in a tree like an ordinary bird, but she lacked the courage to fly after it and find out all about its home.

“It is so big,” she said to herself, “that I do not dare to go near it, if it should plunge that long bill into me as it did into the fish that would be the end of me forever, so I shall have to fly along without knowing anything about this wonderful bird. Too bad too. Why no,”—was her next thought, “I don’t need to do that at all, I’ll just fly home and



ask dear Robin all about it, I am sure he knows. Anyway it is time for me to return, I have been away a long time."

So, spreading her wings which seemed small to her after seeing those of the long-legged bird, she flew swiftly out of the swamp straight to the dear old orchard home.



## THE BLUEBIRD'S NEWS



**M**R. Robin saw his wife coming when she was still a long way off, but he did not fly to meet her as was his habit when she was building her nest. At that time there was nothing to lose, but now the precious eggs were to be guarded. He knew she would be



more pleased with him for watching the eggs than she would if he came flying to meet her. So, by way of welcome he sent out to her his most joyous song and she came flying to him chirping her sweetest notes.

“Well,” he twittered as she took her place on the branch as close to him as she could possibly get, “you seem to have flown a long distance. You went out of the orchard in the direction of the road, but you came back straight from the swamp. Have you been there?”

“How did you know that, Robin? That’s exactly where I have been, and O, I saw the queerest bird standing in the lake, its legs were so long that it stood up just like a human, and yet, it had wings. It doesn’t

seem fair for a bird to have wings and such long legs too."

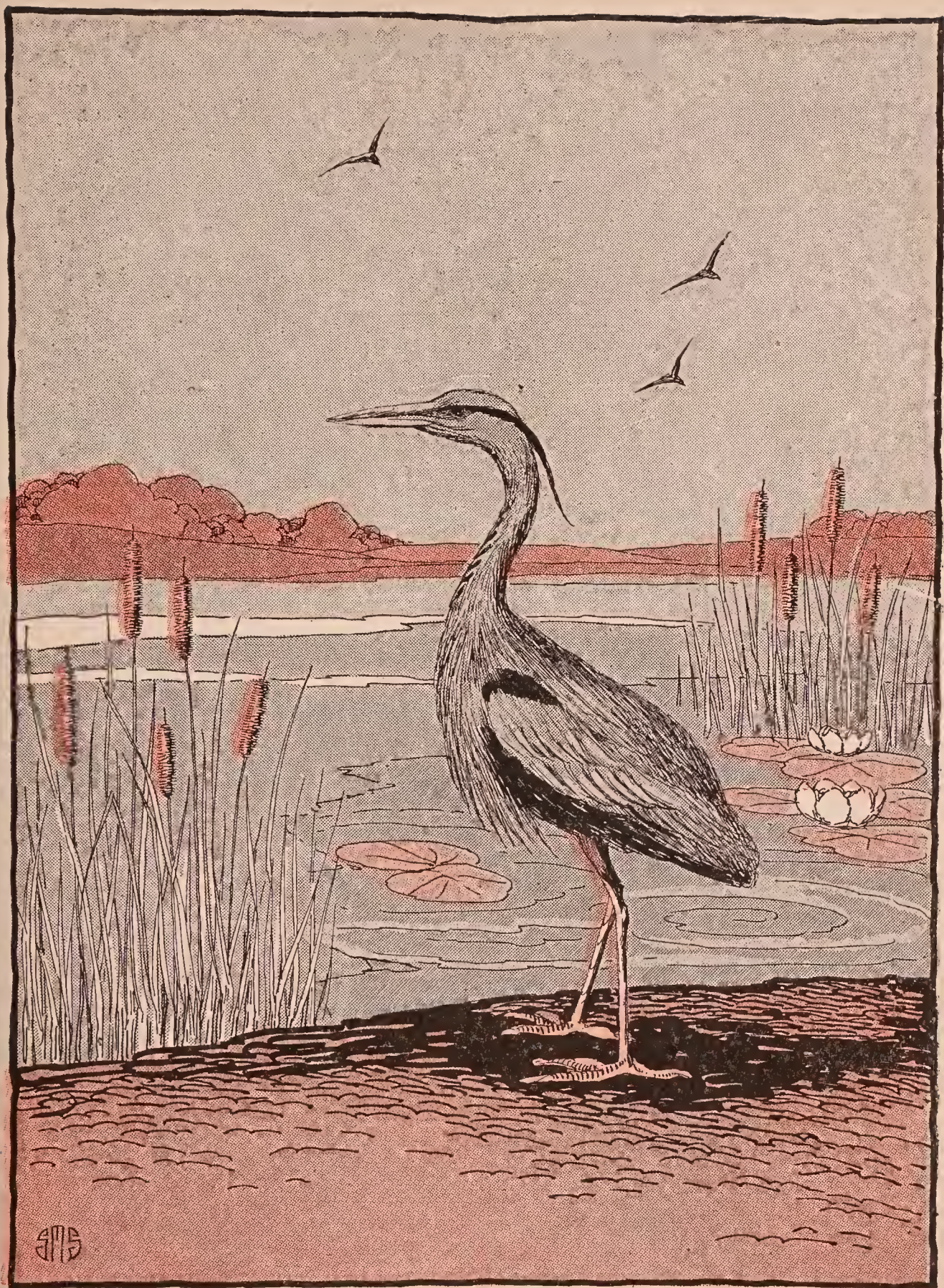
"What color was the bird?" Asked her husband.

"A bluish color and, O my, it had the sharpest bill you ever saw. It gave me a shiver just to see it."

"No wonder," said the husband, "That was a Blue Heron, and its bill is a cruel one. If you had flown after him you would have found his nest in a tall tree and you would have seen many other Heron's nests in the same tree. They keep together in flocks just as Blackbirds do. They come back to the same swamp year after year I have heard."

"Why, that is like the Blackbirds too!" exclaimed the wife.





*Said Mr. Robin, That Was a Blue Heron*



“What did you learn about Blackbirds? I should like to hear?” asked her husband.

Mrs. Robin then gave a full history of everything that had happened during the long summer day.

“I am glad that you saw and heard so much that was new, you are certain to become a very well educated bird,” said Mr. Robin.

“But I am sorry I did not fly after the Blue Heron and see what its nest is like, but perhaps you can tell me.”

“Yes, and of course you understand that a big bird like that must have a big nest. It is made of sticks and twigs, but they do not build their nests as closely and carefully as you build yours. They use the same nests year after year, but they clean house and patch all holes.”



“O, then it isn’t so bad,” said Mrs. Robin, “as it would be to build one of those big nests every year.”

“But tell me, little wife, you have been gone a long, long time, have you had plenty to eat through all this summer day?”

“O, indeed I have, food is so plentiful in this part of the world, that I haven’t been hungry a minute, and how have you fared?”

“Very good indeed, of course I couldn’t go off in search of food, but it has seemed to come in my way every time I was hungry,”

“That must be because you were doing your duty so well.”

“I hope so. We will think so, anyway, but now I have some news for you. Mr. Bluebird stopped to chat a moment with me and the

Bluebirds in the nest in that box down near the house are hatched out."

"O indeed, why how smart they are."

"Yes, but you must remember, they were already here when we found this spot. Mr. Bluebird told me they come here every year. So you see, they did not need so much time looking up a home as we did. Mr. Bluebird said, "This is the only place where there are no English Sparrows and that is why he and his wife come here. He does not like to fight so well as I do, so he just keeps away from the places where the English Sparrows live."

"I have often wondered why there are no English Sparrows around here."

"Mr. Bluebird says the people in the house down there break up their nests and drive them off."



“That seems too bad,” said kind hearted Mrs. Robin, “I suppose they like to have homes and bring up families as well as the rest of us.”

“Yes, of course, but if the people have to choose between Bluebirds and English Sparrows, they take the Bluebirds and I think I should do that myself.”

“So would I,” agreed Mrs. Robin, “they are not only prettier to look at and the Bluebird’s song, though not to be compared with yours, dear Robin, is certainly better than the Sparrow’s twittering.”

“But I must tell you that the Bluebird also brought me some bad news.”

“O, O, tell me quick, what is it?”

“The people in the house down there have a pet Crow, and I am sure that, even

you, are old enough to know what a bad neighbor a Crow is.”

“A pet Crow,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “I never heard of such a thing!”

“Neither did I before, but the Bluebird says it is true.”

“But what in the world can anyone want of a pet Crow? They are ugly, black things at the best. If it were a Bluebird now, or a Robin, it might seem worth while.”

“The Bluebird says that if he had known the pet Crow was here they would not have come back, but they did not discover him until Mrs. Bluebird had already laid an egg, so then they thought they had better stay.”

“Well, if he is a pet Crow,” said the hopeful little wife, “I dare say he doesn’t go very far from home.”



Just at this moment, Mr. Bluebird lit on a limb near them and they at once began to ask many eager questions about the pet Crow.

“I will answer your last question first,” said the Bluebird, “Why do these people make a pet of an ugly Crow, I think it is because he does so many funny things. This morning a man stood at the gate eating something out of his own hand and at the same time talking to the man of the house, when all of sudden, down came that bad Crow, stuck his bill into the stuff the man was holding and flew off to the very top of that tall oak tree back of the house.”

“Well, well,” exclaimed both Robins, “I hope he’ll not get around here with his

thieving, but what did the man think of that?"

"O, they all laughed over it and then the man went into the house. I suppose they gave him his dinner."\*

"Yes," said Mr. Robin, "they could give the man his dinner, but if the bad Crow should come here and steal one of our eggs, or into your house and steal one of your babies, they couldn't make it up to us."

"No," said the Bluebird, "and I heard them scolding about him this morning. It seems he steals bright things out of the house and puts them in an old pump down by the barn. The men upset the pump and picked up a lot of bright things off the ground and then carried the pump away, so that Jack, that is





*The Pet Crow Steals Bright Things Out of the House*



the Crow's name, couldn't have a place to hide things."\* And at the end of this story the sociable Bluebird flew away.





## OTHER BIRDS



**T**HE days which followed were much alike to Mrs. Robin, but they were not lacking in variety to her husband. He sang his loudest and best and fed her regularly. Although he did not go far from the nest, even when searching for food, he saw many of the other birds with which the orchard thronged and since he was a sociable fellow they had many merry times together. Nearly every day when he was digging for worms on the lawn in front of the house he saw the pet

crow, but the friendly "Caw, Caw" met only silence from him.

"He is not my kind," said Mr. Robin, one morning to little Mr. Wren, whom he met upon the lawn, when the Crow was loudly calling, "Caw, Caw, Caw," from the peak of the barn. "It is better to treat him coldly now than it would be to let him hang around us and find out where our nests are."

"He already knows where mine is," said the Wren, "all the world knows that."

"Yes," agreed the Robin, "but it will do him no good to stay around your house now, for he knows he is too big to get through the door, and I do not think he will trouble you much, even after your little ones are hatched out. He knows what will happen to him if



he comes hanging around your home. Your attack on the Red Squirrel some time ago was the talk of the orchard."

The Wren plumed himself at these words of praise and then flying to the roof of his house, he sang a merry song while the Robin having pulled out of the lawn a long fat earthworm, hurried with all speed to feed it to his wife.

As he was leaving the home tree, soon afterward, in search of more food he met a beautiful Baltimore Oriole who stopped for a chat and the Robin immediately gave a few warning notes about the pet Crow.

"O, he can't trouble us," said the Oriole, "my wife you know makes her nest like a deep cup hung from a limb, and I don't think he can get at the eggs. But I should think

you would fear him, since your nest is so shallow.”

“Yes, but we watch it closely, and my wife has decided that when our little ones are hatched we will go farther into the middle of the orchard and she will build a new nest for the next brood. Of course that is a great deal of work and something which we do not always do, but she thinks she would rather build a dozen new nests than to lose even one precious egg.”

“I think she would, for every one knows what good and careful mother birds belong to the Robin family. I suppose I ought to add that you make good fathers too. You stay around home and look after your family better than we Orioles do, we like to have a good time.”





*Mrs. Oriole Makes Her Nest Like a Deep Cup Hung From the Limb*

“I like to have a good time too,” said the Robin, “but you see, we have different ideas as to what makes a good time. Mine comes when we have a nest full of little ones to care for.”

At this moment they heard a faint tapping near them and then a gentle voice said, “Yes, Mr. Robin, that is true, we all have different ideas of a good time. To me it means tapping this big, round, apple-tree trunk to get its rich sap.”

“Why, I always supposed you were after insects, when you made holes in the trees that way,” said the Oriole.

“Of course we take insects when we find them, but our real reason for making holes in the trees is to get the sweet sap which is hidden under the bark.”



“It is a great surprise to me to hear you say that,” said the Oriole, “for I have always heard that birds like you who tapped trees were after insects which were hidden under the bark.”

“O, yes, I see, you have mixed me up with my first cousins the Woodpeckers.”

“But you are a Woodpecker too, are you not?”

“I suppose I am, some people call me that and of course, I do peck the wood, but my correct name is Sapsucker. There are a great many Woodpeckers, the most common of which are the Red-headed and the Downy.”

“That must be the little black and white fellow with the red band around his neck,” said the Robin, “I have often seen him tapping the trees, does he eat the sap too?”

“O no, he eats nothing but the insects he finds under the bark.”

“I have seen that big kind you speak about,” said the Oriole, “with the bright red head.”

“Yes,” replied the Sapsucker, “he is truly a handsome bird and he is seen almost everywhere, but he is quite unlike the rest of the family.”

“In what way?” asked the Robin.

“Well, I don’t like to tell stories about my relations,” said the Sapsucker, “but it is true that this beautiful Red-headed Woodpecker does sometimes eat the eggs of other birds. It is hard to believe it, but I have seen him with my own eyes steal the eggs when there was plenty of his favorite food around. So,



he must do it out of pure mischief which is something that none of the rest of our family could ever do.”

“I have heard before”, said the Robin, “that we should watch out for the Redheaded Woodpecker, but I never quite believed it. I am very glad to have talked with you, Mr. Sapsucker, “since I have learned something new. But now it is feeding time, so good bye, until some other day.” And with these words the Robin flew away.

“That Robin is such a talkative fellow,” said the Oriole, “that I never get a chance to say much when he is around, but I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.”

“Well, please do,” said the Sapsucker, “I am sure I am willing to tell you all I know.”

“Do you tap only apple trees?”

“No,” said the Sapsucker, “we tap any trees which have sap in them, but the trees which we like better than others are the pine trees, the sugar maples, apples, pears, mountain ash, haw and white birch.”

“You surprise me,” said the Oriole, “you seem to like a good many. I should think you’d kill the trees and make the humans hate you.”

“Well,” said the Sapsucker, “If there were just one tree in the world we would soon kill it, but since there are so many trees, we take a little from each and not a great deal from any particular one. Then you must remember, we eat many other things which people want to be rid of. We eat ants, beetles, caterpillars and flies. So, after all, we are not so bad, even if we do, now and then, kill a tree.”



Just at this moment a beautiful song burst upon the air and the birds looking around saw one much larger than the Oriole sitting on top of the tallest pear tree and singing with all his might. He was rusty brown in color and as he sat singing on the limb his long tail hung gracefully down almost touching the limb below.

“My, but that is singing,” said the Downy Woodpecker.

“Very good,” answered the Oriole, “I don’t know that I could do much better myself.”

“Do much better yourself!” screeched the little Woodpecker, “I wonder if you think you can sing like that?”

“What is the name of the bird?” asked the Oriole, quite anxious to change the subject.

“I don’t know, I wish the Robin were here, he could tell us I am sure,” answered the Woodpecker. At this moment the Robin lit on the limb beside the Oriole.

“What, you two visiting here yet?” he asked.





## SOME BIRD STORIES



**B**EFORE either one of the birds could reply to Robin's question there came again the notes of a sweet song from the top of the tall pear tree. When it ended Robin exclaimed:

“A Brown Thrasher, and the first one I have heard this year! How I wish he would sing again.”

But even as he spoke there was a rush of wings over their heads and the topmost limb of the tall pear-tree was empty.

“That is the worst fault the Brown Thrasher has,” said the Robin, “he is the finest singer of the whole Thrush family, but his song is always too short.”

“Then I am glad I happened to hear him this time,” said the Sapsucker, “but now I must leave your delightful company and get back to my nest.”

“Is your nest anywhere around here?” asked the Robin.

“Well, I don’t mind telling you both, since neither of you is a robber bird, that there is a big basswood stub, just at the edge of the woods, on the other side of this orchard. We dug a deep hole in this soft basswood, and



there on top of the chips, my mate is sitting on five white eggs.

“I am glad to know that you took a dead stub in which to dig your nest,” said the Oriole.

“We are not always so careful, but this basswood stub happened to please our fancy and so there we are.”

“You admit then that sometimes you do dig holes for your nest in good trees?” asked the Robin.

“O yes, now and then.”

“And of course the tree dies?”

“I suppose it does, though we don’t stay around long enough to find out.”

“I am afraid then, Mr. Sapsucker,” continued the Robin, “that you do more harm than good.”

“Perhaps we do,” said the Sapsucker, “but what of it? We are here and I suppose we will stay. Anyway we have more sense than the Whip-Poor-Will and Nighthawk, who although they are first cousins to each other are different in many ways.”

“Yes, I know that,” said the Robin, “yet I have heard that there are humans who really do not know the difference between them.”

“I cannot see why they should ever mix them up!” exclaimed the Sapsucker, “of course they both lay their eggs flat on the ground without protection of any kind, but the Whip-poor-will lays her eggs in the woods, while the Nighthawk lays hers in an open field, sometimes on a bare rock and I have even heard of their being laid on the



stony roofs of those things called houses where the humans stay. There was never such a thing as a Nighthawk laying her eggs under a tree or even near a bush.”

“But you know,” said the Robin, “humans don’t know all these things.”

“If they’d use their eyes more they would know these things.” Returned the Sapsucker crossly. “There is a Whip-poor-will’s nest in the woods over beyond the orchard. The other day a man came into the woods with a gun, and the minute Mrs. Whip-poor-will saw him she jumped off the nest, flew near the man and pretended to be lame.”

“What good did that do her?” asked the Oriole.

“Why don’t you see? Humans are always anxious to get their hands on a bird, I sup-

pose because birds have wings and they have none, but when the man saw the Whip-poor-will limping he thought he could catch her easily, so he followed her. She kept a little ahead of him making him think she was a poor, lame bird, until they were far from the nest, then she spread her wings and disappeared. I call that a very good joke," and at that Mr. Sapsucker spread his wings and left them without a goodbye.

"Perhaps he thinks that is a joke too," said the Oriole looking after him."

"Perhaps it is," answered the Robin, but if he had not been in such a hurry I could have told him a better joke than that, but he didn't even give me time to ask him to wait a minute."



“Well, tell the tale to me”, said the Oriole, “you see I am perfectly willing to wait any length of time for the sake of hearing a good story.”

“You are certainly a bird of leisure, Mr. Oriole, I don’t see how you manage it,” was the Robin’s surprised remark.

“O, it’s easy enough when you just make up your mind to it,” chirped the Oriole, and then he broke into his most rollicking song. The Robin was too polite to interrupt, so he waited patiently until the song was over.

“I know all about that Whip-poor-will’s nest the Sapsucker spoke of,” began the Robin, and the Oriole was immediately all attention. “It so happens that there are lots of ground beetles near the Whip-poor-will’s

nest and for that reason I am around there several times in the day. Yesterday when I was near there some children were running through the woods and they came bolt on the Whip-poor-will and her little ones. They stopped just a minute to look at them and went right on without touching the birds or harming them.

When I went back there toward night the Whip-poor-wills, little and big, were all gone. While I was sitting in a tree near by, wondering what had become of them, back came those same children and some women with them. The children pointed to the very spot where the nest had been, they couldn't mistake it, you know, because it was close to some big black stones. But the women



shook their heads and wouldn't believe the children at all. I was sorry for the children and wished that I could explain that the children were right, and that the mother Whip-poor-will had made her little ones run off to some other place. They were just about big enough to run with the mother's help pushing them along."\*

"So, because you were not able to tell them all about it," said the Oriole, "I suppose the women will always think that the children didn't know what they saw with their own eyes."

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, that was a joke on the women, wasn't it?" asked the Oriole.

“Yes,” returned the Robin, “but my wife will not think it much of a lark if I don’t get home pretty soon, so good bye for this time,” and the Oriole was left to himself.





## IN THE MORNING



*The Wren Was Trilling From the Top of His Dwelling*

**T**HE NEXT morning something happened. By the time the sun was just peeping over the farther side of the swamp, Robin had sung his early song and was on the lawn in front of the house seeking his breakfast. The Wren was trilling from the top of his little dwelling and from the peak

of the barn roof came the loud cawing of Jack the pet crow. Not a human was stirring about the place, even the "hired man" had not gone to the barn to milk the one cow. Music was ringing from bush and tree far and near, and for the time being the birds owned the earth. Suddenly the Wren darted from his post and lit near the Robin.

"Listen to that bold, bad Crow," he said, "he's been calling that way ever since the first peep of dawn. I suppose he thinks if he keeps it up long enough some of us respectable and well-bred birds will answer him, but I am sure, I never shall though he calls until he drops."

"Ho, there he goes!" exclaimed the Robin, as something big and black swept over them.





*He's Been Calling That Way Since Dawn*

Both birds looked up, expecting to see Jack sailing above their heads, but instead, there was another Crow and it flew straight to the peak of the barn and took its place beside Jack who at once ceased his anxious, "Caw, Caw!"

"O, do you see?" said Mr. Robin, "he wasn't calling to any of us at all, he was calling a mate."

"Well, she has answered him," said the Wren, and both birds looked at the two crows, who with their bills together were making low sounds.

"I wonder where she came from," said the Robin, "isn't this bad? for now instead of one crow to watch out for, there will be two."

The Wren was about to add his scolding to



that of the Robin when suddenly the two black things opened their wings and fled off toward the swamp. The Wren and the Robin immediately darted to the top of the highest tree and watched the Crows until they were mere specks beyond the swamp.\*

“They have gone off to build a nest,” said the Robin, “rather late for Crows, but I suppose he could not go alone.”

“Why should they go so far away when there are plenty of good nesting places around here?” asked the Wren.

“I have heard,” was the Robin’s answer, “that they like to nest in pine or other evergreen trees, and just beyond that big swamp there is a long stretch of evergreens, so I suppose that is where they have gone.”

“Well, I don’t care much why or where they have gone,” said the Wren, “if they only stay away.”

“They will do that, for the rest of the summer, you may be sure,” said the Robin wisely, “and after that, we don’t care.”

“No,” said the Wren, “if they are foolish enough to stay here through all the cold weather it is nothing to us.”

“But now for a worm,” said the Robin, “to carry to my wife with the good news that the ugly black creature of which she was so afraid is gone.”

Breakfast for two being over and the good news having been told, Mr. Robin took his place near the nest and was about to begin one of his best solos when, from a clump of



bushes, on the other side of the orchard fence, there came a sound which startled Mrs. Robin so much that she nearly fell out of the nest.

“O,” she exclaimed, “did you hear that dreadful sound, dear Robin? “I thought the people in the house down there did not allow cats around the place.”

“Cats!” exclaimed Mr. Robin, “what do you mean? There are no cats any where about.”

“But I heard one,” insisted Mrs. Robin, “listen now, and you will hear it too.”

Mr. Robin sat silent a moment and then came the faint mewling which had so scared Mrs. Robin.

“Cheep, cheep, cheep!” called Mr. Robin, “O, little wife you are so funny. That was not a cat but another bird.”

“A bird, O, are you sure? I know you are very wise, dear Robin, but it does not seem as if a bird could, or would, even if he could, make a noise of that kind.”

“But, it is a bird, my dear, and a harmless one too, of that I am certain.”

“Well,” declared Mrs. Robin, a little unkindly, “it’s a disgrace for a bird to make a noise like that, it ought to be called a Catbird.”

This amused Mr. Robin so much that he hopped the whole length of the limb, and he could not answer her for several minutes, finally he managed to say, “What a clever little wife you are, for that is his true name, “Catbird.”

“I must say, he is well-named,” answered





*For That Is His True Name, "Catbird"*



the wife, "but I do wish he would stop making that noise."

"Hark," exclaimed Mr. Robin, and the next moment there came a burst of sweet song from the same direction. When the singer paused for a moment or two, Mrs. Robin said:

"Now that was something like singing. Why Robin dear, I do believe that song was almost as beautiful as yours!"

"Your praise is very fine indeed, my dear," replied Robin, "but the Catbird sings far better than I do."

"The Catbird!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin, and she was silent a moment from pure astonishment, then she said:

"O, yes, I understand, that is one of your jests."



“Indeed darling, that is no joke, that was the Catbird who sang so beautifully, but now, listen again!”

This time it was not a “me-ow,” nor a burst of music, but a queer sound as if someone back in the bushes were breaking up sticks.

“You don’t mean to tell me, Robin,” said the puzzled wife, “that the same bird is making all those sounds?”

“The very same, my dear.”

“He is something like the big Mocking birds which we used to hear in the warm country where I flew a while ago with the rest of my family.”

“Yes, he is often called the Mocking bird.”

Then Mrs. Robin seemed to have a bright idea and she said:

“Maybe he is the same bird and comes here as the warm weather begins, just as we have.”

“No, you would not think that if you could see him. He is much smaller and of a different color, besides he does not sing so loudly nor in so many different ways as does the other Mocking birds of which you speak. I think there must be a pair of Catbirds nesting not far away, and he just happend to stop in the clump of willows to sing a little song. He may never come near us again.”

“Well, I don’t care,” said Mrs. Robin, “of course his song is fine, but your song suits me well enough, and anyway, you never sound like a mean cat.”

Just as she said these words, the mewling notes began again and Mrs. Robin begged





*The Other Mocking Birds of Which You Speak*

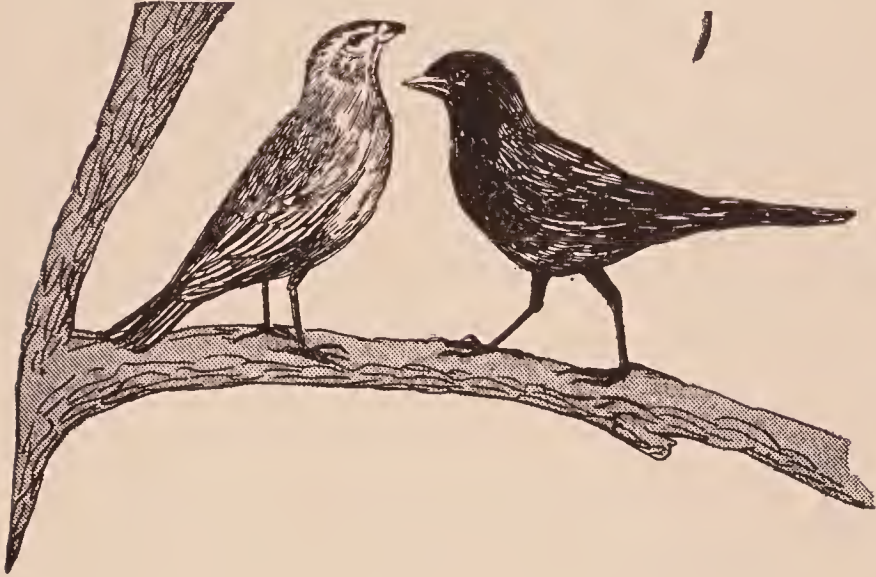
her husband to sing his loudest to drown the cat sound.

Mr. Robin opened his bill to grant the request when a loud Bang, bang! tore through the air and seemed to fill the world with fright.





## THE COW-BIRD'S STORY



**G**LORIOUS June! and the earth seemed full of birds, every tree in the orchard, as well as in the small piece of woods next to it, was thronging with young birds of all ages. Their shrill cries for food seemed to take the place of the father birds' songs, for only the worst shirkers among the feathered fathers had time for singing. At the orchard

home Mr. Robin was doing his best to silence the shrill clamor of his four little ones who had been coaxed out of the nest by his busy wife in order that she might clean and repair their home for the next brood. Everywhere the story was the same, Feed, feed, feed, seemed to be the continual cry of the youngsters, and there was but little time for play and idle chat among the old birds.

One morning, however, the Oriole, who always took family cares lightly, and the Cow-Bird, who never had any, met on the orchard fence and as usual seemed to have time for idle conversation. While they were talking of the weather and bird affairs in general a man came along carrying a long black thing on his shoulder. The birds at once flew into the thickest part of the trees



where they were well-hidden from the man's eyes. When he was out of sight, the Cow-Bird said to the Oriole.

"Do you know what it was that man was carrying?"

"No," said the Oriole, "I don't, do you?"

"Yes, it was a gun."

"A gun!" exclaimed the Oriole, "I have heard of those. They are dreadful things, are they not?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the Cow Bird, and many days ago when the birds were all busy making nests and laying eggs, or sitting on them, a man came along here with a gun and shot a Cat Bird that was singing in the clump of bushes right beneath us, don't you remember hearing the noise of the gun?"

“Yes, I do remember something about it.”

“I should think you would remember it, there was such a terrible bang that all the birds around here were scared nearly to death. I was told that Mrs. Robin, of the Orchard Grove, nearly fell out of the nest because she thought she was shot.”

“And what became of the Cat Bird?” asked the Oriole.

“O, it was killed, the man was what is called a good shot. He took the bird to the village with him and it seems the humans have something they call a law about shooting birds and they do some just things to the wicked people who kill them. So they took this man off somewhere and put him in a cage to punish him for shooting the Cat Bird.”



“Well, wasn’t that fine!” said the Oriole, dancing about in his joy, “I have heard that people sometimes put birds in cages, so it serves them right if they are put into cages now and then. But who told you all of this?”

“The Blue Jay, you know he stays here all the year around and he hears the people talk so much that he understands what they say.”

“What became of the Cat Bird’s mate?” asked the Oriole.

“O, I never heard about that, I suppose she had to bring up her little ones all alone.”

Just at this moment Mr. Robin lit on the fence under the tree and as soon as the Oriole saw him he repeated the story he told the Cow Bird, who by this time had flown away.

“Well,” said the Robin, “I am glad to hear that the man was punished for his wickedness, and I think I’ll go home and tell my good wife all about it, she will be glad to hear of it, for she was very much scared.”

“And how about you?” asked the Oriole.

“Well, I must say, I was frightened too, although I had heard guns before, but that was the first one that my wife had ever heard in her life, and now I think I must hurry away from your pleasant company, as my young family is waiting for me to feed them.”

As soon as Robin reached the home tree and had fed his young charges, he repeated the story of the Cat Bird.

“That’s all very well,” said Mrs. Robin, “and I would say, the story is true, because



the Blue Jay generally has things correct, but I must say, I don't like to hear of anything coming from the Cow Bird."

"O, that is not right," said Mr. Robin.

"Perhaps it is, but just now, when I was down on the lawn looking for a worm there came along a little Chipping Sparrow with one of her own birds and a young Cow Bird twice as big as she was, and she was feeding it and taking as much care of it as if it had been her own bird. It kept her very busy too." (1)

"It was too bad, of course, dear wife, but we cannot help it."

"Do you think the Chipping Sparrow will watch her nest more closely next time?" asked Mrs. Robin.

“I hope so, but I think I am not so sorry for the Chipping Sparrow as I am for the mother Catbird. Think of her having to bring up all those babies alone, just because that cruel man shot his gun. If her babies are such eaters as ours the poor thing has her beak full.”

“Yes, dear Robin, but I am so glad to know that people do care enough about us creatures of the woods to punish those who harm us. I always supposed that humans were so busy with their own affairs that they wouldn’t bother about us as much as that.”

“I think we ought to be quite safe around here, after this,” said Mr. Robin.

“Yes,” was the answer, “and if we have as good fortune with the next brood as we have



had with this one, we will come here to live next summer. And now, Robin dear, if you will stay here and watch the eggs which I have laid in the new nest I will go away for food this time."

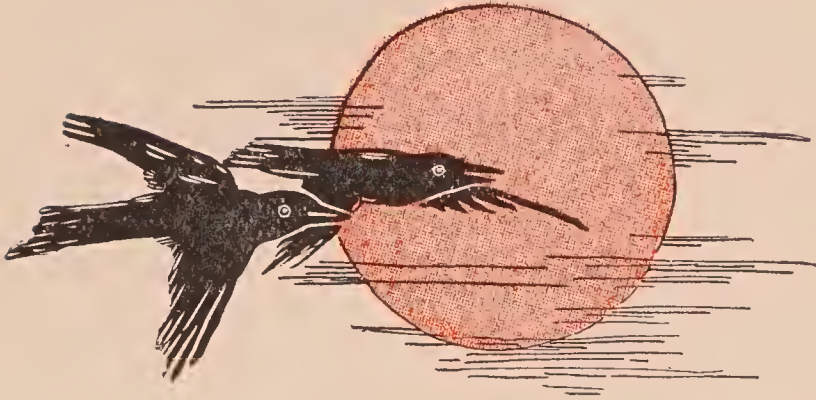
She did not wait for her husband to consent or refuse, but was gone like a flash.







## AWAY THEY FLY



MRS. ROBIN was away so long that her husband began to get quite uneasy about her; he knew it was time to be off in search of food, but he dared not leave the nest entirely unguarded. Presently the youngsters lifted their heads and gave the shrill cry which he understood all too well.

“O, yes, I know, you are all hungry,” he chirped uneasily, “but there is not a thing here for you. We must wait for Mother.”

At this moment, just as he said this, Mrs.

Robin flew to the babies and began to feed them as quickly as possible.

Robin knew that it was his place to fly away at once after more food, but he was full of curiosity to know why his faithful little wife had been so long away.

“I suppose I did stay longer than I ought to have done,” explained Mrs. Robin, in answer to his questions. “But you know I begin to sit again tomorrow, and so I flew around a little for exercise and I saw something which I know will interest you. Of course you know that the Wrens have a nest in a box out near the barn fence. The back of the box is some kind of stuff through which you can see, so the people climb up on the fence to look at the little ones in the





nest. When I saw a boy standing there peeping into the nest I flew into a bush near by where I could see what was going on, and this is what happened:

“When the little ones heard their mother coming they raised their heads and screamed for food, just as our little ones do, but when the mother Wren got her eye on the boy watching them, she made a funny kind of a chirp and down the youngsters’ heads dropped while the mother stood there as though she had never heard of such a thing

as feeding young ones. After a long time, the boy took the hint and went away.

“Then the mother Wren fed the babies quickly. I stayed there in the trees so long watching that I saw this thing happen several times. The boy was determined to see the little ones fed and the mother was determined that he should not do so. It was queer to see how quickly the Wrens minded her order. Of course the mother Wren didn’t mind my looking at her, but she wouldn’t give the little ones anything until the boy jumped down where he couldn’t see into the nest.” (3)

“Smart little mother Wren, truly,” said Mr. Robin, “I don’t wonder you stayed to watch her.”



“But please tell me, my wise husband, why do the humans want to pry into our bird homes? Why should they care what we do or how we do it? What would they think of us if we were always poking around their homes and trying to find out every single thing they do and say?”

“My dear little wife, it is very plain that you don’t know much about humans. They like to understand things. They not only look into bird’s ways, but they study and puzzle and inquire into everything under the sun; they are made that way. We don’t do so, because we have all we can do to attend to our own affairs.”

“O, dear Robin, how wise and ready you are to explain things to me. I may some day

be as ready as you are, but I am sure I shall never, never, be so wise, much as I wish it."

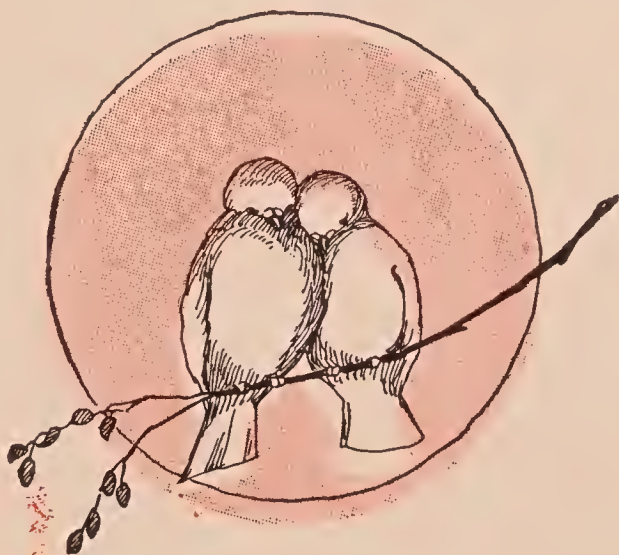
"There is one thing sure, little wife," said Robin, giving her a loving little touch with his bill, "you can never be wise just by wishing. There is much more to it than that," and with this puzzling sentence he flew away on another worm hunt for the little ones.

The following morning Mrs. Robin began sitting, this time on five eggs. Mr. Robin thus was left with the entire care of the young birds, to feed them and to train them in flying. So well did he fulfill these duties that by the time the second brood was hatched, the first brood could fly well and



feed themselves. This left Mr. Robin free to help in the care of the second brood of little ones. Everything went well with them and by the first of September they were indeed a most beautiful family.

\* \* \* \*



I saw them one chilly morning gathered around a mountain ash eating the berries, and as I counted them, just eleven, I wondered if it was their last meal in the north land. Mr. Robin had no song to give, he was

intent upon one thing, a good, hearty meal. But as I watched them fly away I hoped they would all return in the spring to make the old orchard ring with their songs and our eyes glad with the sight of their beauty and grace.

FINIS







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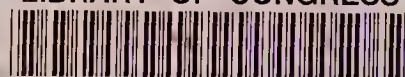








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